

The Impact on Neighboring Black African States of Chad's Turmoil

An Intelligence Assessment

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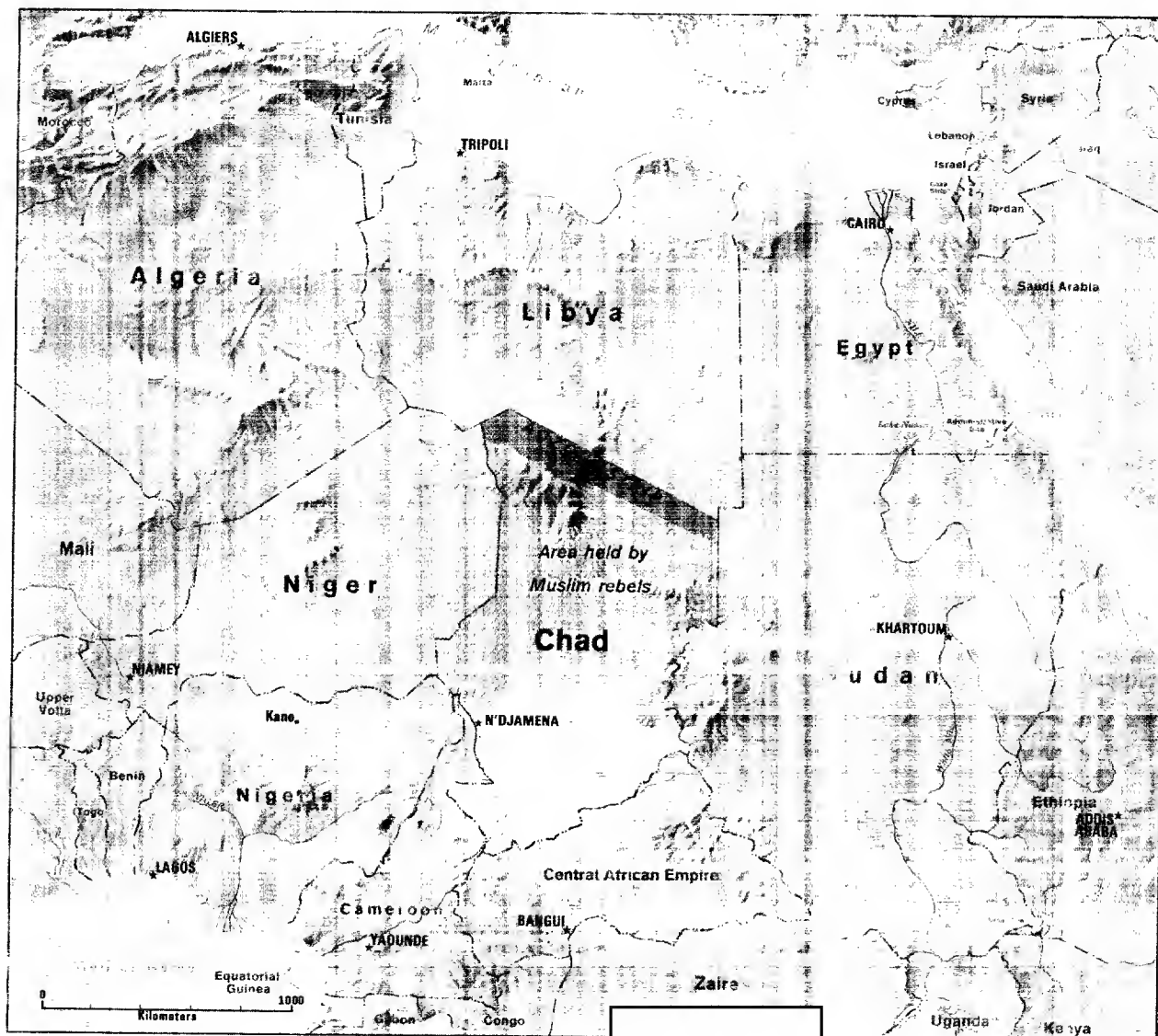
**The Impact on Neighboring
Black African States
of Chad's Turmoil** [REDACTED]

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Key Judgments

Chad's future evolution is of growing concern to surrounding black African states as the long struggle there between warring Muslim and non-Muslim factions appears to be becoming increasingly chaotic. Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Central African Empire are reassessing their vulnerability to instability in reaction to what they see as the danger of growing fragmentation in Chad and intensified civil war along racial and religious lines. [REDACTED]

- The concern of Chad's neighbors partly reflects a fear that the conflict there—if it intensifies and spreads—may generate border security problems and possibly lead to an influx of refugees.
- Bordering countries are worried that the status quo in central Africa—a bridge between Arab and black Africa—may be upset by the emergence of a Muslim-dominated regime in Chad that includes influential Libyan-oriented elements.
- The real underlying anxiety of adjacent states, all of which have Muslim populations of varying size, is that they may become more direct targets of Libyan activism in the future.
- Regionally influential Nigeria is seeking to play a more vigorous peacemaking role in Chad than it has in many previous African disputes.
- Doubts about French determination to stick it out in Chad may cause moderate francophone states to look to the United States to be more responsive to their security needs and to seek better accommodation with Libya. [REDACTED]



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What's Next in Chad?

Neighboring black African states—like Chad—have their own ethnic and religious divisions and intra-Muslim frictions. All of them view Chad's future political evolution with considerable confusion and uncertainty. They are not optimistic that the situation will stabilize any time soon, even with their own active peacemaking efforts. They all seem to recognize that the postindependence period since 1960 of national domination by Chad's southern Christianized and French-oriented elite is over, and that opposing Muslim elements—in rebellion since 1965—will be an important part of, if not in control of, any new central government arrangement that emerges. Although the course of events in Chad is difficult for them to foresee, neighboring African leaders brood about several possible scenarios:

- They feel that the best that can be expected in Chad in the immediate future is a more workable cease-fire and a possible agreement for a new decentralized federal structure of government. Such a solution, however, would most likely serve only to legitimize the present de facto partition of Chad and do little to ease the threat of intensified civil war.

- A central government dominated by the Libyan-backed Muslim group led by Toubou tribal chieftain Goukouni could be imposed by military force of arms, particularly as the Chadian Army pulls back in the field and shows signs of disintegrating. Despite underlying nationalistic proclivities, a Goukouni regime would be seen as a largely compliant one for larger Libyan interests in the region because it probably would be heavily dependent on continued Libyan support for survival.

- There could be an insurgency in southern Chad by Christian and pagan tribes in reaction to the prospect of outright domination by Muslims, whose centuries-old hold was broken by French colonizers in the early 20th century. The installation of a Libyan-backed and potentially repressive Muslim government would increase the possibility of a southern insurgency and the

exodus of refugees to neighboring Central African Empire (CAE) and Cameroon where many fellow tribesmen live just across the border.

Libyan Ambitions in Central Africa

Chad's neighbors, against the backdrop of recent turmoil there and increased Libyan involvement on behalf of Chadian Muslim rebels since 1973, are increasingly concerned over what they see as potential Libyan threats to their own security. Even so, Libyan President Qadhafi—for all his ambition and messianic zeal south of the Sahara—has wanted quite different things from different states in the central African region. Libyan activism accordingly has been quite variable in recent years and by no means matches the often exaggerated suspicion African states harbor toward Libya. In all cases, the Libyans would like African countries to take a far more radical, pro-Arab line at international gatherings and at the UN. Libya's long-term interests are also served by the disruption of regimes considered to be “traditionalist”—the francophone and pro-Western regimes of CAE, Niger, and Cameroon would qualify, even though the latter two states have Muslim leaders—and by the encouragement of “progressive,” preferably Muslim, elements wherever they exist.

Chad, where Tripoli has territorial ambitions in the extreme north,¹ has been the principal Libyan target to date. Qadhafi may ultimately hope for a compliant Muslim regime in Ndjamena which would turn a blind eye toward Libyan subversive designs aimed through Chad more at Sudan and Egypt than at any neighboring African country. In any case, Chad—with a majority Islamic population long dominated by non-Muslims supported in turn by “neo-colonialist” France—has offered the most exploitable opportunity

¹ Libya claims and has militarily occupied the so-called Aozou strip along the inside length of Chad's northern border, which Tripoli maintains was assigned to it by a disputed Franco-Italian draft treaty of 1935. Libyan claims are also based on the historical lordship exercised by the Sanusiyyah kings of Libya over most of Chad's Islamic sultanates prior to the French conquest.

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for the Libyans, who feel a duty to assist "oppressed" Muslim elements wherever they exist. [REDACTED]

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Libya has border claims against neighboring and predominantly Muslim Niger. The Libyans apparently supported an abortive coup conducted in 1975 by elements of the large Hausa tribe against President Kountche. The Niger Government has been dominated since independence in 1960 by the small Djerma tribe, and the Hausas have been virtually excluded. In countries with a partly Muslim population, such as Nigeria and Cameroon, Tripoli would like to see a substantial increase in Muslim political influence. Nigeria, as black Africa's most populous and influential state, has particular attraction for Tripoli because it is scheduled to return to civilian rule next October. There are indications that the Libyans are taking an increasing interest in the evolution of the Nigerian political party scene and northern Nigerian Muslim politics. The largely non-Muslim and politically unstable CAE may also present a potential opportunity to spread the banner of Islam. [REDACTED]

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African Feelings of Vulnerability

Niger. President Kountche's five-year-old military government has striven for good relations with Libya in hopes of making it more difficult for the latter to foment problems. Nevertheless, Kountche is convinced that Tripoli has malevolent intentions toward his regime and territorial designs on Niger's northeastern region where its economically important uranium mines are located.² Niger has no insurgent problem, nor has any of its territory been occupied by Libya. The Qadhafi government has tried, however, to force nomadic Toubou and Tuareg tribesmen—who roam northeastern Niger and the neighboring desert areas of Libya and Chad—to adopt Libyan citizenship. Libyan economic and trade agreements with Niger are as yet of minor importance and give Tripoli no real leverage. [REDACTED]

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⁴ Although Niger is one Africa's poorest countries, it has the fifth largest uranium reserves in the non-Communist world, which are exploited by France and other Western consortium partners. Tripoli refuses to recognize the validity of present Libyan-Niger borders, which were set by a 1931 Franco-Italian treaty. The Libyans feel their southern border with Niger should be expanded to include the area once controlled by the Sanusiyyah Islamic brotherhood, a still powerful Sufi sect, from which sprang the royal house of Libya. [REDACTED]

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Last year, as the fighting in Chad escalated, Niger began moving to build up its modest military establishment—with the acquisition of US C-130 transport aircraft and French armored cars—and to reinforce its Saharan patrols. Last month, the armed forces were deployed on maneuvers in southeastern and central Niger in part to reassure the local population disquieted by events in Chad. This followed an upsurge in Chad of Muslim rebel activity in the Lake Chad region by the so-called "third army" of several hundred men that draws its support from Chadian residents who straddle the frontiers of Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The group crosses the poorly patrolled frontiers of all three countries and maintains clandestine recruitment offices in them. [REDACTED]

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Nigeria. Head of State General Obasanjo, a non-Muslim southerner, is quite uneasy over trends in Chad because he feels Nigeria's own large Muslim population—which comprises at least 47 percent of its 70 million or more people—may offer more fertile ground for Libyan exploitation now that the country is headed for civilian rule and a far more fluid political environment. His immediate concern is that possible Libyan involvement in northern Muslim politics could complicate a successful return to constitutional government this October by reinforcing the proclivity Nigerian politicians already have for political confrontation and violence. Looking farther ahead, Obasanjo is concerned that there may be increased Libyan pressure to weave a militant, radicalized Islam into Nigeria's political fabric. [REDACTED]

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The extent of possible Libyan activity and intrigue in northern Nigerian politics is far from clear and is difficult to document. It is known that Tripoli has offered large sums to Nigerian Islamic organizations, ostensibly for religious purposes, and is trying to develop contacts with receptive faculty members and students at several universities in northern Nigeria.

Many Nigerians assume that Libya is providing money to northern politicians. The motives they attribute to such alleged Libyan involvement include encouraging progressive Muslim elements to play a spoiling role against the conservative Muslim political establishment, and ensuring that a Muslim-based party comes to power either to make Nigeria a "Muslim nation" or, failing that, to promote the establishment of a separate Islamic republic in northern Nigeria. [REDACTED]

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At this point, it appears that the Muslim-oriented National Party, which represents the traditional northern establishment, is most likely to dominate Nigeria's future civilian government. Its principal antagonist in the north is the small People's Redemption Party, which many Nigerians see as the most logical recipient of Libyan financial largess. This maverick group regards the major northern party as reactionary, and has a generally reformist and xenophobic outlook. It has been involved in several political clashes with the rival National Party. Some Redemption Party members are thought to have Libyan connections. The party is centered in Kano, where there is a long-established Libyan community. Kano, moreover, is the principal center of the Tidjaniyya Islamic brotherhood, now the largest Muslim sect in Nigeria, whose adherents are principally younger Nigerians. The Tidjaniyya reportedly are more puritanical and favor a more orthodox form of Islam than do other Nigerian Muslims. [REDACTED]

the recent turbulence in Chad, where it tends to see Libya acting as a surrogate for the Soviets. Cameroon's own experience in putting down a Communist-backed insurgency in the early 1960s makes it feel all the more vulnerable to outside subversion. [REDACTED]

Present Libyan-Cameroon diplomatic relations reflect an attempt on Tripoli's part to gain influence with Cameroon as a member of the Chad-Libya reconciliation commission, which was appointed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), while Yaounde has tried to pin down definite Libyan economic and financial aid with no strings attached. Several years ago, Libya reportedly expressed interest in developing Cameroon's thorium deposits, which can be transmuted into fissionable uranium. [REDACTED]

Central African Empire. Against the background of apparently spontaneous antiregime disorders last January, CAE Emperor Bokassa is acutely sensitive to events in Chad and fears instability there could spill over to pose even graver problems for his fragile government. His rupture of relations with Libya late last month reflects a suspicion that Tripoli was in some measure behind the January demonstrations and may be fostering further opposition to the government, possibly in collusion with the Soviets, whose presence in the CAE may be reduced. [REDACTED]

Official relations between Nigeria and Libya are no more than outwardly cordial and correct. Nigeria is the only sub-Saharan country Libyan President Qadhafi treats as a relative equal. Lagos has made it clear that it will not tolerate the patronizing attitude Tripoli displays toward most African states. Generally, the Nigerians regard Libya as an unwelcome meddler south of the Sahara and a competitor there for influence. There are no known cultural, economic, or military agreements between the two countries. [REDACTED]

Popular opposition to Bokassa has become more widespread in recent years, and the situation appears ripe for further civil unrest and coup plotting. The country's political and economic fortunes have gradually eroded since Bokassa seized power in 1966 and imposed his capricious and mercurial rule. One left-leaning CAE politician, Barthelémy Yangongo, who is allegedly funded by Libya, and who may have ambitions for power, has been dismissed from the government. He is a non-Muslim and belongs to the small M'Baka tribe, which has politically dominated the CAE since independence in 1960. [REDACTED]

Cameroon. Since independence in 1960 under the leadership of President Ahidjo—a Muslim Fulani from the country's north—Cameroon has achieved considerable stability, economic progress, and unity.³ It perceives itself as the most stable and promising country in central Africa, but one that is threatened by an increasingly menacing regional environment. Already nervous about the Soviet and Cuban presence to the south in leftist Equatorial Guinea, Congo, and Angola, Cameroon's unease has been heightened by

³ Cameroon has faced the challenge of integrating not only Muslim and non-Muslim peoples, but also French-speaking east Cameroon and English-speaking west Cameroon, formerly administered by France and Britain. Although the Muslim Fulani represent only some 10 percent of the population, they hold disproportionate influence in the government and military. This is a source of underlying friction with non-Muslim southerners. [REDACTED]

CAE-Libyan relations have been marked by ups and downs since 1976 when Bokassa briefly embraced the Islamic faith and opportunistically signed several economic agreements with Tripoli that have been an important source of financial support for him. At one

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